

Testimony of Tim Appleton
Compassion & Choices Action Network
Regarding SB 1076, An Act Concerning Aid in Dying
for Terminally Ill Patients.
Public Health Committee
February 27, 2023

Chairs, Vice Chairs, Ranking Members and Members of the Public Health Committee. I am Tim Appleton, from South Windsor, CT. I serve as Campaign Director for Compassion & Choices Action Network.

Our state can and should improve palliative and hospice care while at the same time offering some people, with strict safeguards, access to aid in dying.

That's why I'd like to share my support of SB1075 as it will increase access and choice of high-quality hospice care, assisting people to chart their own end of life journey aligned with their own values and beliefs.

For some though, even the best pain and symptom management from a world class palliative and hospice care team cannot control all suffering. That's what makes the need for SB1076 so evident, and in concert with SB1075.

This is the 10th time I have appeared to testify on bills like SB1076. During that time, I have mourned the loss of dear friends who have come before this committee using their last days on this earth advocating for aid in dying and have died waiting for the legislature to act.

To honor them we created a portrait display this year here in the Capitol complex called "They Died Waiting". I hope you saw it and reflected upon the people found in those portraits.

They included my dear friends Sara Myers, Mike Mizzone, Kim Hoffman and more. All of them died waiting for legislative action on aid in dying, in the predicted nightmares each described to this very same committee through written, in person or virtual testimony over the years.

The portraits also included people whose harrowing stories as surviving family members who bore witness to the agonizing deaths of their dear loved ones.

Jennifer Barahona, Jill Hammerberg, Kira Phillips, Jim Naughton and far too many more make the hard choice each year to re-live their trauma by testifying about the worst days of their lives, knowing passage of aid in dying would prevent the same tragic experience to happen to others.

And each join us again this year.

The debate over this legislation is a simple one:

Do we really want the most difficult personal decisions people make at end of life made in consultation with their doctor, loved ones and perhaps faith leaders to also include the government? 75% of Connecticut voters say: "absolutely not".

The legislation includes the same core safeguards it always has:

- A person must be terminally ill with less than 6 months to live
- A person must be mentally capable
- A person must be able to self-ingest medication
- A person's disability or age alone does not qualify for aid in dying

This year, based on the feedback, SB 1076 includes additional regulatory requirements such as:

- A person must have a mandatory mental health evaluation,
- A person must be 21 years old.
- A person must see their physician every 30 days
- A person must be a resident for at least one year

It's clear upon enactment this legislation not only will be the strongest in the nation but more importantly, will work as intended for whom it's intended just as similar laws have done across 10 states and Washington, DC for over 20 years.

I know the testimony you've heard is painful to listen to, but I'd ask you to consider the desperation of those who literally will spend their last days on this earth pleading for change, the pain of those who will again share harrowing stories of the agonizing deaths of loved ones and the real cost of legislative inaction.

To end the trauma, agony and pain forced to put on display year over year for all of us, including you, I urge passage of SB1076.

Not one more person will die because of the passage of this bill, but far fewer will suffer.

Included below is our Portrait Project #TheyDiedWaiting for your review and consideration.

THEY DIED WAITING

For more
information visit
CandC.org/connecticut



#TheyDiedWaiting

Mike
MIZZONE
1962 - 2019



#TheyDiedWaiting

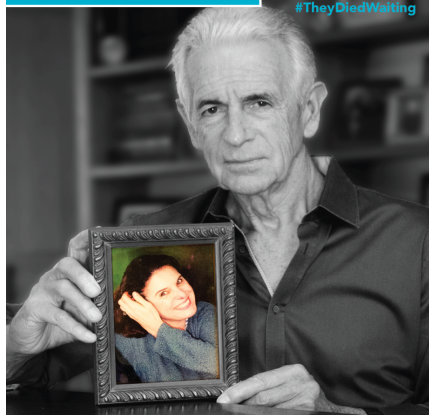


Stricken with ALS, Mike begged for the option of aid in dying. He died without it, in a nightmare scenario he predicted and wife **JENNIFER MIZZONE** says, did not deserve.

Pamela
NAUGHTON
1946 - 2013



#TheyDiedWaiting



Pamela fought pancreatic cancer for four years. Out of treatment options, she told her husband **JAMES NAUGHTON**, "I don't want to wake up anymore." He couldn't help her.

Moregan
ZALE
1943 - 2017

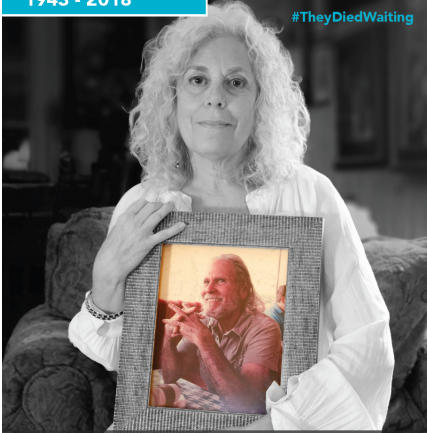


#TheyDiedWaiting




Dying from cancer, Moregan used her only option to control the end; stop eating and drinking. **PJ SCHIMMEL** says her wife's tortuous death compels her to advocate.

David Austin
MURRAY
1943 - 2018



Diagnosed with kidney cancer, David wished to choose the time for a peaceful, painless death in his home. His wife **DEB HOWLAND-MURRAY** says that didn't happen.



#TheyDiedWaiting

Kim
HOFFMAN
1962 - 2022



Kim battled cancer and lobbied lawmakers to her final days for end-of-life options. **JOY CIPOLLO** continues to share her wife's message: she deserved a better death.



#TheyDiedWaiting

Clare Marie
PHILIPS
1949 - 2021



Without the option of aid in dying, Clare ended her life violently to escape end-stage multiple myeloma. Daughter **KIRA PHILIPS** won't let this tragedy be for nothing.



#TheyDiedWaiting

Karen
SELF-MANN
1958 - 2019



Karen Self-Mann thought she had appendicitis; it was stage 4 cancer. She told daughter **KRISTEN KESKA** she wanted a peaceful passing, but died after weeks of brutal distress.



#TheyDiedWaiting

Rosemarie
LOMBARDI
1936 - 2009




Rosemarie led an extraordinary life, until an unspeakably horrible death from cancer. Her husband **BONNELL LOMBARDI** says passage of aid in dying in CT is long overdue.




#TheyDiedWaiting

Mark
FEY
1952 - 2012



JILL HAMMERBERG'S husband Mark was at peace with terminal cancer, but never anticipated the excruciating pain his last day. Her wish: for dying patients to have a choice.




#TheyDiedWaiting

Sara MYERS
1954 - 2016

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Sara had ALS. She spent her final years advocating for end-of-life care options but died without them. Her husband **CHUCK ROSS** still marvels at her relentless drive.

Barbara DONALDS
1934 - 2009

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Barbara was devastated by ALS, and hoped the end would come quickly. It did not. Daughter **JENNIFER BARAHONA** advocates so others have options her mother did not.

Clifford Roderick BINIARZ
1967 - 2021

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Debilitated by cancer, Clifford hoped aid in dying would pass in CT. It failed & he never gained legal means to control the end of his life. His brother **TYRONE BINIARZ** fights on.

Bradford BLANCHARD
1928 - 2015

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LAURALYN BLANCHARD'S husband practiced medicine for 48 years and advocated for aid in dying. At the end, when he wanted the option for himself, he didn't have it.

Bill KAPLAN
1947 - 2021

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Bill died in pain, heavily medicated, unable to say goodbye. Wife **LISE DONDY** says aid in dying would have prevented such horrific suffering.

Tracey GAMER-FANNING
1970 - 2018


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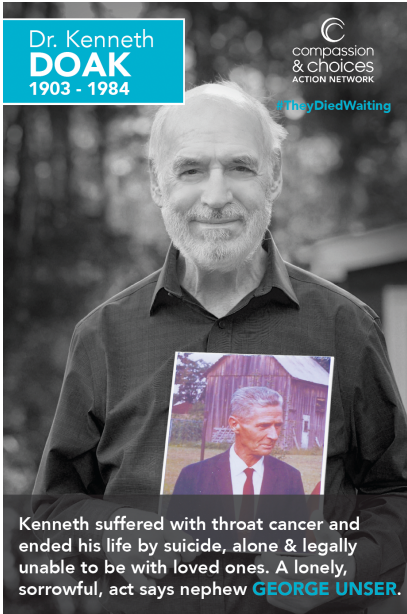
Tracey, dying from a brain tumor, asked husband **GREG SHIMER** to ensure she would die in dignity. Instead, her final days were filled with pain, drugs, and confusion.

Dr. Kenneth
DOAK
 1903 - 1984



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Kenneth suffered with throat cancer and ended his life by suicide, alone & legally unable to be with loved ones. A lonely, sorrowful, act says nephew **GEORGE UNSER**.

THEY DIED WAITING

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Edna
TEATOR
 1918 - 1995



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ALLIE FENNELLY'S grandmother Edna took pride in home and children, and worked until age 75. Her health failing and ready for the end, she refused medical treatment.